Mekong River, a stream which, like the Yangtze, the Salween, and the Irrawaddy, rises in the great mountains and plateaus to the west of China proper). The boundaries and political relations of Tongking, Annam, Laos, Cambodia, and Cochin-China have been subject to many changes. The French and the Japanese have been only the latest of many conquering invaders. As might be expected, the region shows the effect of Chinese and Indian cultural influences, the Chinese strain being strongest toward the north.

The Island of Formosa, just southeast of the China coast, must also he mentioned. Conquered and made a part of the Chinese Empire in the seventeenth century, and to-day predominantly Chinese in population, in 1895 it was ceded to Japan.

EFFECTS ON THE CHINESE OF THEIR ENVIRONMENT: CHINA PROPER

From the foregoing description of the face and climate of China the effects of geographic environment upon the Chinese must be at least partially apparent.

In the first place, China proper is fitted by nature to be the home of a great, fairly unified culture. It possesses extensive, fertile valleys. It displays a marked diversity and a rich supply of plants, many of them useful for food, clothing, and shelter. Its fauna shows variety and a large degree of serviceability to man. Its mineral resources suffice for all the more pressing needs of civilization—at least before the recent development of industrialism. Except for the Northwest, Szechwan, and the Southwest, the internal barriers of hills do not seriously discourage the spread of peoples and extensive

intercommunication. Along the south coast the hills offer something of an obstacle, enough to account for the differences in language between that region and the North, but not enough to prevent political and cultural unity with the rest of the country. Navigable streams, particularly those of the Yangtze system, penetrate most of the land and facilitate internal commerce. China proper is one of the regions of the globe fitted to be the seat of a great empire.

Possessing a home so richly endowed with the physical bases of civilization, as a rule the Chinese have been economically all but self-sufficient. The country is so large that they have had